

### 3. TWIN ELEPHANT CALVES AND INTERVAL BETWEEN BIRTHS OF SUCCESSIVE ELEPHANT CALVES

(With a photograph)

On 26 October 1961, a timber-working female elephant No. 918, Htwar Aye Ma, belonging to the State Timber Board, gave birth to twins, a male and a female, in the Indawgyi circle, Myitkyina Timber Extraction Division.

The male calf was dropped at 06.30 hours and the female calf at 10.00 hours. The male calf measured 2 ft. 9 in. and the female calf 2 ft. 8 in. at the shoulder.

The Forest Department maintains a register of all timber-working elephants. According to this register the age of the dam which gave birth to the twins was 26 years. She had previously given birth to a female calf on 10 June 1959. The *sin-ok* (head mahout) in charge of the elephant camp reported that the gestation period of the twins was 22 months. The dam was mated with a male timber-working elephant, No. 1744, Than Kyaw, from the same camp.



Twin Elephant Calves

This is the second record of the birth of twin elephant calves in Burma. The birth of twin elephant calves previously was recorded by Mr. Gordon Hundley in 'Twin Calf Elephants' (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 27 : 628-9).

Mr. A. J. Ferrier who was in Burma for 34 years with Messrs Steel Brothers & Co. Ltd. writes from Ayrshire, Scotland, on 10 April

1962: 'Hundley's Thoungyin Twins are well known as twin elephants are very rare in the first, and don't often survive in the second place.

'I believe that twins were born to a Steel's elephant in Prome in 1931 but they died at birth and I believe the B.B.T.C.L. had twins in the Chindwin some years later but they also died.

'I personally have never seen twin elephants.

'The size of the calves 2 ft. 9 in. and 2 ft. 8 in. at the shoulder is just a shade below average but single calves of this size and even less are born every year.

'The period between the birth of a single calf on 10 June 1959 and of the twins on 26 October 1961 is certainly surprising and is less than I have ever known. I remember a few cases of around two years and 7 months and never so little as two years and 3½ months.'

Mr. E. O. Shebbeare writes from Banbury, Oxon, England, on 4 April 1962:

'I think Sanderson is right in saying: "Elephants breed about once in two and a half years" (THIRTEEN YEARS AMONG THE WILD BEASTS OF INDIA : 61). He appears to base it on the relative size of the two calves sucking the same dam, also assuming gestation to take 22 months. This allows eight months after giving birth before her next heat—which sounds reasonable.

'Khedda work sometimes throws an independent light on this too when, as often happens, a family group forms the entire catch in a small stockade. Looking at the matriarch with all her surviving offspring (except perhaps a few of the older males) you will have no difficulty in placing her family in order and will generally get the impression that the normal interval is two or three years.'

Mr. E. P. Gee contributed an excellent note on this point entitled 'The Indian Elephant (*E. maximus*): Early Growth Gradient and Intervals between Calving' (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 53 : 125-128).

25, INYA MYAING ROAD,  
UNIVERSITY P.O.,  
RANGOON, BURMA,  
July 24, 1962.

TUN YIN